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ABSTRACT

A survey of 42 faculty members in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) was conducted to aid in the development of a spelling course for VCCS students; 21 questionnaires were returned. The survey investigated causes of spelling problems, possible solutions, most common types of errors, curricula in which students have most spelling problems, and the number of spelling courses being offered. The state was divided regionally to determine if particular spelling problems were unique to an area. The survey indicated that faculty attributed spelling problems primarily to junior high and high school teacher apathy, though student carelessness, phonetic difficulties, and lack of spelling knowledge were also frequently cited. Omission of letters or syllables and transpositions or partial reversals were found to be the most common errors. Though spelling problems were common to all curricula, few of the colleges provided spelling courses. The respondents felt that college instructors should stress the importance of correct spelling, concentrate on pronunciation errors, and teach basic spelling skills. It was concluded that since all errors occurred statewide, one spelling course could be designed for the entire state system. Ideally, this course would be individualized and might use the typewriter as an aid. The report contains an outline for a spelling course based on Spache's seven categories of spelling errors. (JP)

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A Proposal for Teaching Spelling in the Virginia Community College System

Rochelle Ireland

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INTRODUCTION

Student papers contain more spelling errors and their errors are much more serious than they have ever been in the past. Statements such as these are often repeated by many teachers in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). These teachers are from all academic areas--from science, social science, humanities, and the technical fields. I heard this complaint so often that I decided a survey should be done to determine what had been done in the past and what is presently being done to teach spelling to VCCS students. The VCCS in unique because of the "Open Door" admissions policy upon which it was founded. This policy states that a high school diploma is not necessary in order to be admitted to any school within the VCCS. Because of this admissions policy, improperly prepared students are admitted to the VCCS. This could be one reason for the large number of student spelling errors in the VCCS. But spelling problems are not unique to the VCCS, as George W. Feinstein, professor in the English Department at Pasadena City College and author of several textbooks, reveals in the preface to Programmed Spelling Demons:

> "Some people collect stamps or rocks. I collect misspellings. As an English teacher at various junior colleges I have collected bushels of splendid specimens. I have tabulated the misspellings as though they were jewels, which indeed some of them are. But I find that my students are not fumbling symmetry, soliloquy, super-

> sede, and sacrilegious, as listed in the grammar books. This is because students use these words approximately once per annum, and then will usually look them up in a dictionary anyhow. No, my incoming students have been enthusiastically muffing its, you're, truly, and writing. And my colleagues unhappily admit that their theme writers have been sinning likewise."[1]

Mr. Feinstein conducted this study in order to determine the areas in which most students were weak. From the data collected he wrote Programmed Spelling Demons, "a realistic spelling manual."[2]

Historically there have been many attempts to produce a good spelling manual. In 1596 Edmond Coote, master of the free school of Bury St. Edmunds, says in the preface to English Schoole-maister:

> "I undertake to teach all my scholers, that shall be trayned up for any grammar schools, that they shall neuer erre in writing the true orthography of any word truly pronounced. . . and the same profit doe I offer vnto all other both men & women, that now for want hereof are ashamed to write vnto their best friends: for which I haue heard many gentlewomen offer much."[3]

The purpose of the study conducted for this paper was not to write a spelling manual but rather to develop a spelling course that will meet the needs of the VCCS students. This course was designed around information obtained from a survey of VCCS instructors, personal communication with VCCS instructors, and current literature dealing with spelling instruction.

In 1940 George Spache, then a professor at Friends Seminary in New York City, did a study of spelling problems and found that the omission of a sounded letter was common among poor spellers.[4] According to Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay, two noted authors in the field of reading, "Reversals, omisssions, additions, substitutions and ignorance of the alphabet are common mistakes of poor spellers."[5] I decided to do a survey to see if students in the VCCS who were having spelling difficulties were making most of their

errors in these areas.

METHODS

A questionnaire (Appendix A) based in part on Spache's categories was sent to forty-two faculty members in the VCCS. These faculty were members of reading departments, English departments, or the developmental studies divisions at each of the twenty-three schools in the VCCS. These particular areas were chosen because it was felt that the instructors in these areas would be more aware of spelling problems and the causes than would the instructors in other fields. Twenty-one questionnaires (fifty percent) were returned. These twenty-one respondents represented nineteen different schools in the VCCS. The state of Virginia was divided into four geographic regions in order to ascertain whether or not the problems the students were experiencing with spelling were unique to one region of the state or were the same statewide. The four geographic regions were: Northern, Tidewater, Central, and Southwestern (Appendix B). Four responses were received from the Northern division, four from the Tidewater area, seven from the Central region, and six from Southwestern Virginia.

RESULTS

The responses received from the area of Northern Virginia listed eight different causes of spelling problems. These were: (1) phonetic difficulties; (2) no knowledge of spelling rules; (3) carelessness; (4) trying to spell by sound; (5) wrong image in the memory bank; (6) lack of drilling in elementary school and junior high; (7) grade inflation; and (8) lack of parental support for a spelling program.

The respondents from the Tidewater area listed many of the same causes such as carelessness and teachers in high school who disregard the teaching of spelling. But, in addition to these causes, one respondent divided the

causes of spelling problems into two areas: (1) dictated words and (2) written words. This respondent stated that the cause of spelling problems with dictated words was auditory discrimination. The causes of spelling problems with written words were three-fold: (1) careless copying; (2) careless writing; and (3) ignorance of rules. Another respondent from the Tidewater area said that a cause of spelling problems was that, as students read, they don't pay attention to the way words are spelled. Other causes given in addition to the ones already mentioned were: (1) the inability to spell words by syllables; (2) students being asked to spell above their skill level; and (3) poor pronunciation. The example which was given for the last response stated that if one pronounced the word "context" as "contex," the person would most likely spell it the way it was mispronounced.

The respondents from Southwestern Virginia also listed incorrect pronunciation as one of the causes of spelling problems. The also agreed that carelessness, poor handwriting, and spelling the words like they sound were also causes of spelling problems. Other causes given by this group of respondents were: (1) illogical, inconsistent spelling rules; (2) misapplication of rules and phonics; (3) lack of knowledge and awareness of the sound and spelling patterns of English; (4) lack of competence in language arts; (5) poor knowledge of phonics; (6) poor knowledge of spelling rules; (7) not knowing how to use the dictionary; (8) poor reading skills; and (9) illiteracy.

The responses reflected from Central Virginia restated many of the causes already mentioned such as inattention to details, irregular spellings, auditory perception, and poor phonic ability. In addition to these causes, the inability to learn quickly was also listed as a cause. Other causes

given by the Central Virginia respondents were: (1) vowel confusion; (2) confusion on the spelling of endings of words; (3) origin of the various words; (4) poor word configuration memory; (5) lack of awareness of phonetic sounds; (6) lack of basic vowel/consonant and spelling rules; (7) dialect differences; and (8) limited experience with the printed word.

On the questionnaire the respondents were asked to list possible solutions which would alleviate the causes of spelling problems. Several respondents avoided this question. Some solutions given by the Northern Virginia respondents were: (1) place emphasis on the importance of correct spelling; (2) place more emphasis on visual instruction; (3) do constant drilling; (4) teach the basic spelling rules; and (5) use an A-V kit approach. This last respondent failed to mention any specific A-V kits which work well with college students who have spelling problems. Another respondent stated that different methods work for different specific problems, but did not elaborate on this statement.

A respondent from the Tidewater area also said that each instructor should stress the importance of spelling. Other methods given by the Tidewater respondents to alleviate the causes of spelling problems were: (1) stress carefulness; (2) use a structured spelling; (3) improve pronunciation; (4) allow the students to work on spelling skills at their instructional level rather than the level which they should eventually attain; and (5) practice spelling polysyllabic words by tapping out the syllables. One person suggested the deduction of points for misspelled words.

The respondents from Southwestern Virginia also listed concentration on pronunciation errors as a possible way to alleviate the causes of spelling

problems. Other suggestions given were: (1) memorize spelling rules; (2) teach the five or six spelling patterns with their characteristic sounds; (3) offer a spelling course; (4) teach students how to use the dictionary; and (5) teach spelling in the reading courses. One respondent said the way to alleviate the causes of spelling problems was to work on the area of deficiency, but there were no suggestions given as to how to determine the area of deficiency.

The Central Virginia respondents also felt that students should be made aware of their spelling problems through special courses. They also felt that all faculty should stress the importance of spelling and sound recognition when using their special technical vocabulary. The respondents from this geographic region also felt that students needed a great deal of practice in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to standard English. Other possible solutions given by these respondents were: (1) have the students master the encoding and decoding of phonics in the early grades; (2) stop ignoring problems in grades 10-16+; (3) train people in how to learn (study skills); and (4) educate students in the areas of letter/sound relationships, spelling rules, and attention to details. One respondent said the way to alleviate spelling problems was to simplify the English spelling system but gave no specific methods.

The questionnaire listed seven categories used to classify spelling errors. These categories were developed by George Spache, Professor Emeritus at the University of Florida and past president of the International Reading Association.[6] These seven categories are: (1) omissions: An omission occurs when one or more letters of a word or a syllable are left out. The omission of a syllable is defined as omitting two or more successive

letters. (2) additions and repetitions: An addition occurs when a letter or letters are added. A repetition of a letter or letters of a word is considered an addition. (3) transpositions or partial reversals: A transposition or partial reversal occurs when the correct sequence of letters in a word is disturbed. (4) substitutions: A substitution occurs when a letter or letters which may or may not be similar in sound are substituted for the correct letters. The correct letters are omitted from the word. (5) confusing homonyms: This error occurs when a student uses the incorrect form of a set of homonyms. (6) incomplete: This error occurs when the word is completely omitted or only partially completed. (7) unrecognizable: An error is classified as unrecognizable when the word contains four or more letters or the combination of letters does not form a real or a misspelled word. The respondents were asked to note which area(s) had the largest number of spelling errors. The respondents from Northern Virginia noted that omission of a letter or syllable, transpositions or partial reversals, and confusing homonyms were the areas where most errors occurred. One respondent ranked the types of problems by percentage of errors found based on 865 examples of fifty most commonly missed words. According to this person, thirty-one percent of the errors are due to confusing homonyms. The homonyms confused were almost entirely "to-too," "their-they're-there," and "your-you're." The next category where errors occurred was in the area of omission where twenty percent of the errors fell. The area of additions or repetitions and the area of substitutions each had nineteen percent of the errors. The area with the lowest percentage of errors--only eleven percent--was transpositions or partial reversals.

The errors in the Tidewater region fell mainly in the areas of omissions of letters or syllables and transpositions or partial reversals. All four

respondents checked these areas as places where most spelling errors occurred. Substitutions and confusing homonyms were the next areas in which spelling errors occurred. Incomplete words and unrecognizable words had the least amount of spelling errors.

In Central Virginia, fifty-seven percent of the respondents felt the area of omissions of letters or syllables and the area of transpositions or partial reversals had the most errors. Three areas, additions or repetitions, substitutions, and confusing homonyms, each received forty-three percent of the responses and words which were unrecognizable were felt to cause twenty-nine percent of the errors. One respondent from Central Virginia ranked the areas of errors in terms of which one was the most frequent. According to this respondent, the areas could be ranked as follows from the one with the most frequent errors to the one with the least frequent: (1) confusing homonyms; (2) transpositions or partial reversals; (3) omissions of letters or syllables; (4) additions or repetitions; (5) substitutions; (6) unrecognizable words; and (7) incomplete words.

The respondents from Southwestern Virginia also felt that most errors fell in the three areas of omissions or words or syllables, transpositions or partial reversals, and confusing homonyms. The four areas of additions or repetitions, substitutions, incomplete words, and unrecognizable words all ranked the same with the respondents from Southwestern Virginia.

Once it was determined that a spelling problem does exist among the students who attend school in the Virginia Community College System, the respondents to the questionnaire were asked to identify any specific curriculum which may have students with more spelling problems than another curriculum. One respondent from Northern Virginia noted that most of the students who have spelling problems are naturally identified in the English classes, but

the problems with spelling are not concentrated in any particular curriculum. Another respondent from Northern Virginia felt students in English 01, Developmental English, had the most spelling problems, along with the students who were majoring in automotive, electronics, clercial arts, and the certificate programs.

An interesting response came from the Tidewater area where one person felt that spelling problems should not be classified by curriculum but rather by skill level. This respondent said that most developmental students have spelling problems. This statement cannot be disputed because most of the students who are classified as developmental are so classed because of their weak academic background. Other responses from the Tidewater region also listed the developmental student as the one who had a problem with spelling. The students in the business area and the technology area have problems with spelling also, according to respondents from the Tidewater area.

The belief that spelling errors are not confined to certain curricula was also stated by a respondent from Central Virginia. The developmental student from Central Virginia was also listed as having problems with spelling. Other areas where a problem exists in Central Virginia were: (1) technical/ occupational fields; (2) general studies; (3) engineering; (4) automotive; (5) drafting; and (6) electronics.

As in the other geographic regions, a respondent from Southwestern Virginia also said that students in all curricula have trouble with spelling. The only specific curriculum mentioned in the responses from Southwestern Virginia was the vocational-technical fields.

From the questionnaire it was learned that most schools do not offer a separate spelling course even though there is one listed in the state

curriculum guide. Most spelling taught in the VCCS is done in the English classes in either the developmental or the composition sections. Of the four responses received from Northern Virginia, two schools do not offer a separate spelling course. One of the two schools does stress spelling and misused words in English 101, Basic English for Technical Students. In this class, the text used is Handbook for Writers by Laster. The two schools that do offer spelling courses use several different books. At the Annandale and Alexandria campuses of Northern Virginia Community College the texts used are Spelling 1500: A Program by J. N. Hook, Instant Spelling Power by Norman Lewis, and a locally produced instruction booklet. At the Loudoun Campus of Northern Virginia Community College the texts used in the spelling course are Phonics and Spelling Exercises by Gold and Tabor and Programmed Spelling Demons by George Feinstein.

Of the four responses received from the Tidewater area, three said there was no spelling course being offered presently, none had been offered in the past, and there were no plans to offer one in the future. The one school that offers a spelling course, Thomas Nelson Community College, uses the text by Charles W. Ryan entitled Spelling for Adults: A Self-Teaching Guide.

There were seven responses representing six different schools received from Central Virginia. Of the six schools, three do not offer a spelling course at all and two schools, Central Virginia Community College and Lancaster Community College, teach spelling as a part of English 08, Reading Improvement. The text used at Central Virginia Community College is AEIOU Spelling Improvement. The respondent from Lancaster Community College did not list the text used. At Blue Ridge Community College the students qualify for the spelling course through English 08, Reading Improvement and General

100, Vocabulary Development. The texts used in the spelling courses are Spelling 1500: A Program by J. N. Hook, PAR Phonics Review, and Instant Spelling Power by Norman Lewis.

From the six responses received from Southwestern Virginia it was learned that two schools do not offer and do not plan to offer a spelling course. Three of the other four colleges only offer spelling as a part of a reading or a vocabulary course. New River Community College is the only college that responded from Southwestern Virginia which offers spelling as a separate course and it is being offered for the first time this year (1978-79). The texts used at New River are Spellbound by Elsie Rak and Basic Spelling Skills by Buck and Rappaport. Spelling at Wytheville Community College is offered as a part of the reading and vocabulary classes. The texts used at Wytheville are Relevance of Words, Magnetic Patterns of English, Sullivan Reading Series, and Word Patterns. Spelling is part of a course component at Virginia Highlands Community College, but the respondent failed to state which course. The text used at Virginia Highlands is Spelling 1500: A Program by J. N. Hook. At Southwest Virginia Community College, spelling is offered as part of the reading course; the texts used are Basic Spelling Skills by Buck and Rappaport and Magnetic Patterns in Spelling.

The text Spelling 1500: A Program by J. N. Hook seems to be the most commonly used text for teaching spelling in the VCCS. It was used at three of the ten schools that responded that offer spelling as a separate course or as a component of another course. Basic Spelling Skills by Buck and Rappaport and Instant Spelling Power by Norman Lewis were each used at two schools. One interesting point which resulted from this survey was that one school in Northern Virginia and one in Central Virginia each used

Spelling 1500: A Program by J. N. Hook and Instant Spelling Power by Norman Lewis plus one additional book in the spelling course. It would seem from this survey that one text is strong in one area of spelling while the other is strong in a different area.

CONCLUSION

From the responses received from all over the state, it was easy to see that there are many different causes of spelling problems. Even though there were many causes listed by the respondents, there were three which seemed to be listed most frequently. These were: (1) carelessness of the students; (2) phonetic difficulties; and (3) lack of knowledge of spelling rules. There may be many reasons why these problems exist. But it is felt that the main reason is the apathy on the part of the teachers in junior high and high school. After a student reaches seventh grade the teachers seem to feel that if the student can not spell by now, he will never be able to, so why bother to attempt to teach him? There are few, if any, spelling courses offered to students once they are out of elementary school.

From the questionnaires received, the ways to alleviate the causes of spelling problems seemed to fall into three main categories: (1) stress the importance of correct spelling; (2) concentrate on pronunciation errors; and (3) teach the basic spelling rules. The first two methods are not unique to English teachers. These areas should be stressed by teachers of all subjects. The English teachers should teach the basic spelling rules. If only a few members of the class are having a problem, perhaps a handout would be more appropriate than taking class time for this important task. A short review with the entire class may be necessary with more individual attention being given outside of class to the ones who have more difficulties. One respondent suggested the deduction of points for misspelled words. This may

not eliminate a cause of spelling problems, but it may be a motivating force for the person to work on the cause of the spelling problem.

Of the seven Spache categories used to classify spelling errors, the areas of omissions of letters or syllables and transpositions or partial reversals seemed to be where most errors occurred, according to the responses received. There were no significant geographical differences in types of spelling errors; therefore, it appears as if one spelling course would meet the needs of the VCCS students. It was also concluded that there is no specific curriculum where most spelling errors occurred. Students in all curricula make spelling errors.

From the responses received in this survey, it is felt that the ideal course should be individualized in order to meet the individual needs of each student. The most common areas of deficiencies seemed to be phonetic difficulties, the lack of knowledge of spelling rules, and carelessness. If a student is weak in phonics, there may be several reasons. One could be an auditory problem--the student simply cannot hear the difference in sounds. Or it could be because the student has never had any formal phonetic training. The teacher may have to work with the student at a very elementary level of phonetic training. If a student shows a lack of knowledge of spelling rules, constant drill and application of the rules throughout the course are important.

One approach to teaching a spelling course would be through the use of a typewriter. This approach would help the problem of carelessness and would also cause the student to think every letter of a word because in typing, each letter must be thought of individually, whereas in writing it is easy to let the hand go without the mind going with it. Even if a student has

never had any formal typing training, a spelling course should still be taught with the use of a typewriter. In fact, the less typing training a student has had, the more effective the use of a typewriter would be since the student would be so involved with thinking of each letter individually that he would be less likely to let his mind wander. Most VCCS students have not had formal typing instruction because most are in a vocational-technical area. Only one text was found which used the typewriter to teach spelling. This was a programmed text by Leroy A. Brendal and Doris Near entitled Spelling Drills and Exercises: Programmed for the Typewriter. But a typewriter could be used with any text as long as students were required to type all the assignments rather than writing them by hand.

A possible course outline which could be used in a spelling course is found in Appendix C. The Spache categories mentioned earlier were used as guidelines in developing this outline.

Notes

[1] George Feinstein, Programmed Spelling Demons (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1973), p. ix.

[2] Feinstein, p. ix.

[3] D. G. Scragg, A History of English Spelling (New York: Manchester University Press, 1974), p. 88.

[4] George D. Spache, "Characteristic Errors of Good and Poor Spellers," Journal of Educational Research, 34 (November, 1940), p. 187.

[5] Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay, How to Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975), p. 295.

[6] George D. Spache, Diagnosing and Correcting Reading Difficulties (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc,, 1976), pp. 237-238.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete thie confidential questionnaire. Feel free to add any information you feel is pertinent to identifying spelling problems.

Is your school presently offering a course in spelling? (Circle one)
Yes No I don't know
If so, what texts are being used?

If you are not currently offering a spelling course, has one been offered in previous years? (Circle one) Yes No I don't know

Why was it dropped?

Will one be offered in the future? (Circle one) Yes No I don't know

In your opinion, what are the most common causes of spelling problems?

What can be done to alleviate these causes?

Would you identify any specific curriculum that seems to have a large number of students with spelling problems?

In which of the seven areas listed below do most of the spelling errors occur? (Check as many as needed.)

_____1. Omissions: (a) Omission of one or more letters without substitutions
(b) Omission of a syllable (two or more successive letters omitted equals the omission of a syllable)
_____2. Additions or repetitions
_____3. Transpositions or partial reversals: Reversing the sequence of two letters or interchanging letters on either side of a central letter.
_____4. Substitutions
_____5. Confusing homonyms (two-too, coarse-course)
_____6. Incomplete: No word at all or incomplete (libt-liberty, sud-sudden)
_____7. Unrecognizable: Includes words with four or more errors.

Please sign and return this questionnaire by November 1, 1978. For your convenience I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope.

_____
(Name)

_____
(School)

APPENDIX B

VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES, LOCATIONS, AND SERVICE REGIONS

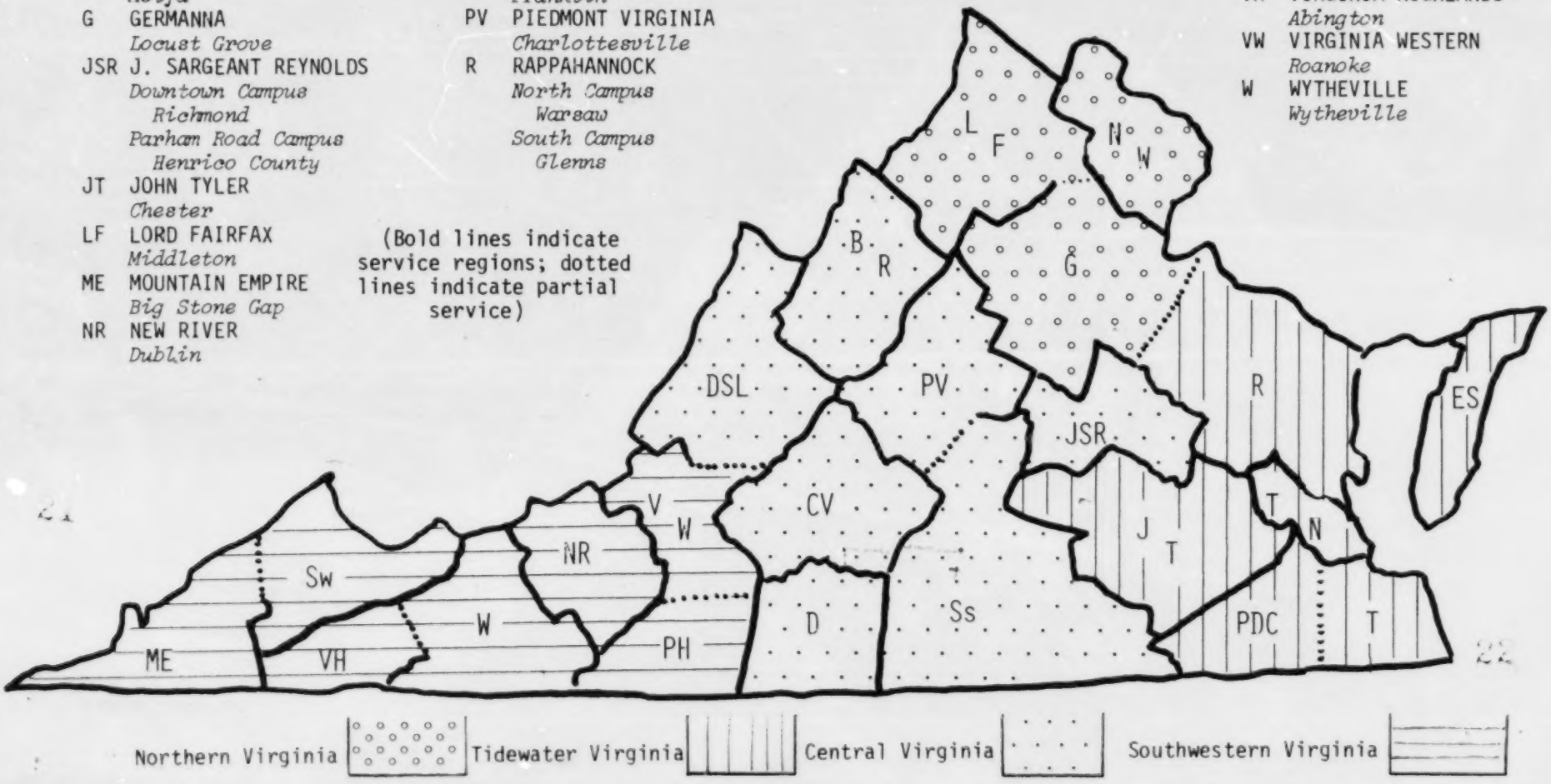
BR BLUE RIDGE
Weyers Cave
CV CENTRAL VIRGINIA
Lynchburg
DSL DABNEY S. LANCASTER
Clifton Forge
D DANVILLE
Danville
ES EASTERN SHORE
Melfa
G GERMANNA
Locust Grove
JSR J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS
Downtown Campus
Richmond
Parham Road Campus
Henrico County
JT JOHN TYLER
Chester
LF LORD FAIRFAX
Middleton
ME MOUNTAIN EMPIRE
Big Stone Gap
NR NEW RIVER
Dublin

NV NORTHERN VIRGINIA
Alexandria Campus
Annandale Campus
Loudoun Campus
Manassas Campus
Woodbridge Campus
PH PATRICK HENRY
Martinsville
PDC PAUL D. CAMP
Franklin
PV PIEDMONT VIRGINIA
Charlottesville
R RAPPAHANNOCK
North Campus
Warsaw
South Campus
Glenns

Ss SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA
Christanna Campus
Alberta
John H. Daniel Campus
Keysville
Sw SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
Richlands
TN THOMAS NELSON
Hampton

T TIDEWATER
Chesapeake Campus
Chesapeake
Frederick Campus
Portsmouth
Norfolk Skills Center
Norfolk
Virginia Beach Campus
Virginia Beach
VH VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS
Abington
VW VIRGINIA WESTERN
Roanoke
W WYTHEVILLE
Wytheville

(Bold lines indicate service regions; dotted lines indicate partial service)



APPENDIX C

Outline for a Spelling Course

to be Offered to Students

in the Virginia Community College System

I Spache Category 1: Omissions

A. Dropping the Final Silent E

Rule 1-Words that end with a silent e usually drop the e before an ending that begins with a vowel.

Rule 2-Words that end in ce or ge keep the e before endings that begin with a or o in order to keep the soft sound of c or g.

B. Words Ending in Y and C

Rule 1-Words ending in y preceded by a consonant usually change the y to i before any ending except one that begins with i. Es is added to form the plurals.

Rule 2-Words ending in y preceded by a vowel usually retain the y before the endings added to them.

Rule 3-Most words ending in c add k before endings that start with e, i, or y in order to prevent the hard c from being sounded as a soft c.

C. Final Consonants Not Doubled

Rule 1-The final consonant of a word is not doubled when the word ends with more than one consonant.

Rule 2-The final consonant of a word is not doubled before an ending that begins with a consonant.

Rule 3-The final consonant of a word is not doubled when the root word is not accented on the last syllable.

Rule 4-The final consonant of a word is not doubled when the consonant is preceded by more than one vowel.

II Spache Category 2: Additions or Repetitions

A. Possessive of Nouns in Apposition and Abbreviations

Rule 1-The possessive should be used before a gerund.

Rule 2-For possessive nouns in apposition, add the possessive sign to the explanatory word.

Rule 3-To indicate individual ownership by two persons, add the possessive to both nouns.

Rule 4-To form the possessive of two or more nouns that represent joint ownership, add the sign of the possessive to the final noun.

Rule 5-The possessive of a singular abbreviation is formed by adding an apostrophe and s to the abbreviation.

B. Possessive of Compound Words

Rule 1-The possessive of a singular compound word is formed by adding 's to the last word of the compound.

Rule 2-Sometimes the possessive is indicated by a noun following the word of.

Rule 3-Sometimes the noun that the possessive modifies is merely understood.

Rule 4-Sometimes the noun that the possessive modifies is separated from it by one or more adjectives.

C. Plurals of Regular Nouns

Rule 1-Nouns ending in f, fe, or ff usually form their plurals by adding s to the singular form. Some nouns ending in f or fe form their plurals by changing f or fe to v and adding

es.

Rule 2-Nouns ending in o preceded by a consonant generally form their plurals by adding es.

Rule 3-Nouns ending in o preceded by a vowel generally form their plurals by adding s to the singular form.

Rule 4-Proper nouns ending in y form their plurals by adding s.

Rule 5-Nouns ending in y preceded by a consonant form their plurals by changing y to i and adding es.

Rule 6-Nouns ending in y preceded by a vowel form their plurals by adding s.

Rule 7-Nouns ending in s or an s sound (ss, ch, x, sh, z) form their plurals by adding -es to the singular form.

D. Plurals of Abbreviations

Rule 1-To form the plurals of letters, numerals, symbols, signs, and words referred to as words, add an apostrophe and s.

Rule 2-Most abbreviations form their plurals by adding s.

Rule 3-Some single-letter abbreviations form their plurals by doubling the single letter.

Rule 4-Abbreviations made up of several letters form their plurals by adding an apostrophe and s.

Rule 5-Many units of weight and measure are the same in both singular and plural.

E. Plurals of Irregular Nouns

Rule 1-In general, pluralize the principal element of compound nouns.

Rule 2-Some nouns change words to form plurals.

Rule 3-Some nouns may appear plural in spelling even though they are singular in meaning. They require singular verbs.

Rule 4-Some nouns have no corresponding singular forms so they require plural verbs.

Rule 5-Some nouns have the same form for singular and plural so the verb must be singular or plural depending upon the meaning of the sentence.

F. Plural Possessives and Simple Plurals

A regular plural noun that ends in s and is followed immediately by another noun is usually in the possessive form--it possesses the second noun. The possession is indicated by the addition of the apostrophe only.

G. Possessive of Irregular Plurals

Rule 1-Irregular plural nouns form the possessive by adding 's to the plural noun.

Rule 2-Plurals of compounds form their possessive by adding 's to the last word of the compound. But if the plural compound ends in a, add an apostrophe only.

Rule 3-The plural possessive of an abbreviation is formed by adding an s and an apostrophe.

H. Retaining the Final Silent E

Rule 1-Words ending in silent e usually retain the e if the ending to be added starts with a consonant.

Rule 2-A few common words ending un ue drop the final e before endings.

I. Final Double Consonants

Rule 1-Words having a double final consonant usually keep both consonants when endings are added.

Rule 2-Double the final consonant of a one-syllable word if:

(a) the word ends with a single consonant

(b) the consonant is preceded by a single vowel

(c) the ending to be added begins with a vowel

Rule 3-Double the final consonant in words of more than one syllable if:

(a) the root word is accented on the last syllable and

(b) the word ends with a single consonant and

(c) the ending to be added begins with a vowel.

Exceptions: All words ending in b, w, or x; if the accent of the base word moves back to the first syllable when the syllable -ence is added.

Rule 4-When the ending -ness is added to a word ending in n, both n's are retained.

III Spache Category 3: Transposition or Partial Reversals

A. EI and IE Words

Rule 1-I before e except after c or when sounded as a as in neighbor and weigh..

Rule 2-Use i before e when the two letters follow an sh sound.

B. Words Easily Mistaken for Each Other

Some words have a similar overall appearance and must be looked at very closely in order to distinguish one from another. A few examples of these words are: tried-tired; sacred-scared; form-from; and fired-fried.

IV Spache Category 4: Substitutions

A. Words Ending in "Seed" Sound and -ise, -ize, -yze

Rule 1-All words that end in the syllable pronounced like "seed"

are spelled cede except supersede, succeed, proceed, and exceed.

Rule 2-The ending -ize is usually used if the derivative of a word is formed from a complete word. Otherwise the ending is -ise.

B. Words Ending in -able and -ible

Rule 1-If the root is a full word or ends in silent e, -able is usually used.

Rule 2-If the noun form of the word ends in -ation, use -able.

Rule 3-If the base word is not a full word, -ible is generally used.

Rule 4-If the base ends in s, -rse, the soft s (but not z) sound, or soft g, -ible is generally used.

C. Words Ending in -tion, -sion, and -cian

Rule 1-When the ending is pronounced "shun" and follows a vowel or the consonants c or r, use -tion.

Rule 2-When the ending is pronounced "shun" and follows a consonant other than c or r, use -sion.

Rule 3-When the ending is pronounced "zhun" and follows a vowel or r, use -sion.

Rule 4-The ending -cian indicates "one skilled in."

D. Words Ending in -ous

Rule 1-The suffix -ous means "full of" or "having qualities of" and is used to form adjectives.

Rule 2-In some words, the y of the root is changed to e or i before -ous.

Rule 3-Sometimes the vowel to precede -ous is indicated in the root itself.

Rule 4-In some words the final silent e is changed to i before

adding -ous.

V Spache Category 5: Confusing Homonyms

1. anyway-adverb which means in any case

   any way-any is an adjective; way is a noun

2. everyday-an adjective which means ordinary or usual

   every day-every is an adjective; way is a noun

3. indifferent-an adjective which means without interest

   in different-a preposition plus an adjective which means in other

4. indirect-an adjective which means not direct

   in direct-a preposition plus an adjective which means directly or straight

5. maybe-an adverb which means perhaps

   may be-a verb which means be able to be or have the power to be

6. sometime-an adverb which indicates an indefinite or unspecified point of time

   sometimes-an adverb which means occasionally or now and then

   some time-an adjective plus a noun which means the passage of an indefinite period of time

7. all right-an adjective which means satisfactory or correct

   alright-an adverb which means all right

8. into-a preposition which signifies motion from without to within

   in to-in is an adjective; to is a preposition

9. past time-a preposition plus a noun which means beyond the time of

   pastime-a noun which means a pleasant way of passing time

10. quiet-a noun which means an absence of motion or noise

    quite-an adverb which means completely or entirely

11. ascent-a noun which means an act of rising or a way that slopes up

assent-a noun or a verb which means to agree

12. allusion-a noun which means an indirect reference

    illusion-also a noun but this is a visual deception or a false impression

13. beside-a preposition which means by the side of or compared with

    besides-an adverb which means also or in addition

14. it's-a contraction which means it is

    its-a pronoun which is the possessive of it

15. almost-an adverb which means nearly

    all most-all is a pronoun; most is an adverb

16. already-an adverb which means previously

    all ready-all is a pronoun; ready is an adjective

17. altogether-an adverb meaning entirely

    all together-all is a pronoun; together is an adverb. When they are used with each other it means in a group.

18. always-an adverb which means at all times

    all ways-all is an adjective; ways is a noun. When they are used together, it means all means.

19. anyone-a pronoun meaning anybody

    any one-any is an adjective; one is a pronoun. Used together, they mean any individual person in a group.

20. everyone-a pronoun meaning everybody

    every one-every is an adjective; one is a pronoun. They mean each without exception when they are used together.

21. nobody-a pronoun which means no person

    no body-no is an adjective; body is a noun. They mean no group when they are used together.

22. someone-a pronoun meaning somebody

some one-some is an adjective; one is a pronoun. Used together they mean some particular person.

23. decent-an adjective meaning proper or right
descent-a noun meaning going down
dissent-a noun meaning disagreement

24. farther-an adjective and an adverb which refer to space and means at a greater distance
further-an adjective and an adverb which refer to time, quantity, or degree and means additional

25. patience-a noun meaning composure or endurance
patients-a noun meaning sick people

26. recent-an adjective meaning late or not long ago
resent-a verb which means to feel indignation at

27. respectably-an adverb meaning in a worthy manner
respectfully-an adverb meaning showing respect
respectively-an adverb meaning in the order indicated

28. therefor-an adverb meaning for that, for this, or for it
therefore-an adverb meaning consequently

29. statue-a noun referring to a carved or molded figure
stature-a noun referring to height or physical, mental, or moral growth
statute-a noun referring to a law or decree

30. liable-an adjective meaning responsible or likely
libel-a noun referring to written defamatory statements

VI Spache Category 6: Incomplete

By teaching the basic spelling rules and phonics, the student should be able to put something which would represent a word down on paper. After

a student makes an attempt at writing a word, the teacher can then diagnose the problem and work on a solution.

VII Spache Category 7: Unrecognizable

This also can be corrected by teaching the basic spelling rules and phonics. The student may have to interpret what he wrote until the teacher can see a pattern of mistakes.

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